WRITTEN ANSWERS TO UNSTARRED QUESTIONS SET FOR 27th MAY, 1998

Acquisition of Land for Air-Base Station at Gandhi Nagar

1. SHRI ANANTRAY DEVSHANKER DAVE: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) the latest position of the land to be acquired for setting up of cantonment and fulfledged (Air Force) Air-Base Station at Gandhi Nagar in Gujarat;

(b) whether the acquisition has been finalised;

(c) whether the Gandhi Nagar is the right place for setting up of this cantonment for western sector, and

(d) if not, the reasons therefor alongwith the total amount of grants-in-aids sanctioned from the budget so far?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES): (a) to (d) Government have acquired 106.25 acres of land at cost of Rs. 3,23,63, 353.00 for setting up the Headquarters of the South Western Air Command at Village Koba, Tehsil Gandhi Nagar.

There is no proposal for establishment of a Cantonment at Gandhi Nagar at present.

Interrogation of IAF Officials at Hashimara Air Base

2. SHRI AMAR SINGH: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) the number of I.A.F. officers identified so far for interrogation at Hashimara Air-Base in West Bengal and how many of them have since been interrogated;

(b) whether it is a fact that most of the said officers have been forced to agree to act of sedition and subversion by the officers manning the interrogation team; and

(c) if so, how many officers have since admitted such allegation?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES): (a) Air HQ have reported that at the Court of Inquiry assembled at Hashimara, 19 officers were examined.

(b) and (c) Although Air HQ have reported that no officer has been forced to make any statement before the Court of Inquiry, two petitions have been received allegating coercion to extract confessional statements. These petitions are under examination.

Petitions alleging Hashimara Air-Base as a Torture Camp

3. SHRI AMAR SINGH: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that a large number of petitions alleging the use of Hashimara Air-Base as to torture camp to interrogate the technical officers and airmen of I.A.F., who protested against discrepancies in salary between pilots and technical staff after the increase of flying allowance last year, have been received; and

(b) if so, the number of such petitions; and the status of such petitions?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES): (a) and (b) Air HQ have reported that no interrogation camp was set up at Air Force Station, Hashimara to interrogate technical officers and airmen.

According to Air HQrs., only a court of Inquiry was assembled at Hashimara from the 12th of February till the 9th of March 1998 where 19 Air Force Officers were called to tender evidence. 9 Officers were held blameworthy by the Court of Inquiry of which the contribution of two

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The sitting of the Rajya Sabha on Wednesday, the 27th May, 1998 was adjourned as a mark of suspect to the memory of Shri Gyan Ranjan. Answers to Unstarred Questions put down in the lists that day were laid on the Table of the House on Thursday, the 28th May, 1998.